



City of Seattle

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Jim Sussex
King County Department of Transportation
Road Services Division, MS KSC-TR-0231
201 South Jackson St.
Seattle, WA 98104-3856

Dear Mr. Sussex,

November 21, 2005

Thank you for the opportunity to share our thoughts on the South Park Bridge Replacement DEIS. We are happy to have the opportunity to contribute to this "once in a lifetime" event to improve bicycle access across the Duwamish River.

In reviewing the five options currently being considered for the South Park Bridge, we have identified some key areas of concern for bicyclists. Specifically, we urge the county to consider the following:

- This will be the only river crossing available to bicyclists between the First Ave S Bridge and S 102nd St in Tukwila – a bicycling distance of nearly 3 miles. As such, it will be a critical bicycle facility.
- The South Park Bridge is currently used by bicyclists to connect downtown Seattle with SeaTac Airport; Georgetown and Beacon Hill with South Park and White Center; E Marginal Way S and the Boeing industrial area with the Green/Duwamish Trail.
- There are a number of safety concerns for bicyclists who use the bridge as currently configured. The sidewalks are currently too narrow for a bicyclist to safely pass a pedestrian. When wet the grated metal bridge deck becomes slippery and dangerous for bicyclists who want to share the general purpose lane. Immediately preceding the current bridge, there are no bicycle cues, such as directional signs or on-street markings for bicyclists. For these reasons, the current bridge is somewhat difficult for bicyclists to navigate successfully.
- A zig-zag ramp may be visually and physically challenging for bicyclists and pedestrians to navigate. Bicyclists may find that a facility along the entire length of the bridge would be easier, safer, and more attractive to use.
- Lower grade inclines provide greater ease of use for bicyclists.
- The expressed goals in the South Park neighborhood plan include improved bicycle and pedestrian facilities. Specifically, one of the top priorities in the South Park Urban Village Plan is to *"connect South Park by bicycle and/or pedestrian facilities to adjacent areas and nearby public amenities. Provide and maintain direct, continuous bicycle routes, and make all appropriate streets bicycle-friendly."*

The Seattle Bicycle
Advisory Board shall
advise the City Council,
the Mayor, and all
departments and offices
of the City on matters
related to bicycling, and
the impact which actions
by the City may have
upon bicycling; and shall
have the opportunity to
contribute to all aspects
of the City's planning
processes insofar as they



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- The project should minimize the impact on the bicycle-friendly streetscape of the South Park business district. The presence of mixed use retail and residential in a small-scale environment helps to optimize the bicycling experience through South Park.
- The project should minimize impacts on the aesthetic environment. While we recognize this is difficult to quantify, many bicyclists, who travel at a slower pace, appreciate a "vivid" and more fine-grain environment at a smaller scale making the travel more pleasant and allowing the bicyclist to feel more at ease.
- While we realize this is not within the direct scope of this project, future opportunities for other municipalities (e.g. SDOT) to implement traffic calming through the South Park business district could be facilitated by constructing fewer general purpose lanes over the South Park Bridge.
- Fewer general purpose lanes over the bridge may reduce vehicle speeds and improve the overall bicycling and pedestrian experience.

With the above-mentioned concerns in mind, we find the rehabilitation option most promising. The rehabilitation option maintains the historic character of the current bridge while enhancing the bicycle/pedestrian facility on both sides of the bridge. Additionally it reduces the number of general purpose traffic lanes from four to three, which we hope would result in somewhat slower vehicle speeds over the bridge. While the alternative includes expansion of the sidewalk from 6 feet to 7.5 feet, we advocate consideration of even greater widening of the sidewalk. The new 7.5 foot sidewalks would not meet AASHTO design guidelines for a shared path and an even wider sidewalk would allow safer passage for bicyclists and pedestrians.

If the rehabilitation alternative is found not feasible, we would suggest consideration of the new bascule drawbridge. While the new 13-foot wide shared bicycle/pedestrian path would provide ample access for bicyclists and pedestrians, the new bridge would have a slightly more negative impact on the South Park business district and result in the loss of a historic and aesthetically interesting facility. Additionally, we have concerns about the accessibility of the path as it will be on the west side only, necessitating a detour under the bridge for those approaching the bridge on the east side.

The impacts and scale of the mid-level and the high-level fixed span bridges are such that we would strongly advise these options be dropped from further consideration.

Please contact us if you have any questions about our concerns. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this important decision. We would appreciate hearing about additional opportunities to review and submit comment as this project proceeds.

Sincerely,

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